



Summary

The national recession didn't exactly pass Kane County by during 2001. However, for the most part, the county's economic indicators were positive. The county's employment base expanded moderately as did construction values. True, joblessness edged up, but it still remained in the elusive "full-employment" range. The only real negative in the county's economic indicators came from a steep decline in gross taxable sales.

Population

After suffering from out-migration in the 60s, Kane County managed to typically show faster than average population expansion. However, in the 90s the county's rate of growth slowed. Between 1990 and 2000, the county's population grew 17 percent, placing it in the bottom half of Utah's counties. Still, population growth in Kane County outpaced the nation's 13-percent expansion. Estimates suggest that the county actually lost residents (less than 1 percent) between 1999 and 2000. The following year the county's population held steady. In the 90s, population grew fastest outside the major townships. Kanab showed the slowest population expansion of all—only 8 percent. But, because it is by far the largest city in the county it still added the most new residents (275 persons). However, the "balance of county" grouping was nipping close on Kanab's heels. Orderville experienced substantial growth between 1990 and 2000 with a 41 percent population increase and an increase of more than 170 new residents.

Demographics

One of the more noticeable changes over the past decade was the increase in Kane County's Hispanic population. In 1990, 1.5 percent of the county's population was Hispanic. By 2000, that share had increased to 2.3 percent. Still, Kane County remains much less racially and ethnically diverse than the state and the nation. Only 5

percent of the county's population is nonwhite or Hispanic compared to 31 percent nationally and 15 percent in Utah.

Over the past 10 years, Kane County has seen a significant aging of its population. In fact, Census data shows that 17 percent of the county's population is over the age of 65—up from the 14 percent figure registered in 1990. Moreover, this share of "seniors" measures substantially above both the Utah (9 percent) and U.S. (12 percent) shares.

Nevertheless, Kane County still shows a higher percentage of the population under the age of 18 than does the nation. This population distribution means Kane County has a small proportion of working-age adults "supporting" its seniors and children. Only 54 percent of the county's population was between the ages of 18 and 65 compared to 62 percent nationally.

As the population aged, Kane County's household size decreased from an average of 2.98 persons to 2.67 persons. Nevertheless, Kane County families are more likely than Utah or U.S. families to be headed by a married couple. Female-headed families with children also make up a smaller share of Kane County families than in the state or the nation.

In terms of 2000 educational attainment, 86 percent of the county's adults (over 25 years of age) has graduated from high school—an improvement from 1990, but still below the state average. Not surprisingly for a nonurban area, Kane County also showed a smaller share of college graduates. However, this portion of the adult population nearly doubled between 1990 and 2000 in Kane County.

The Labor Market

In 2001, job growth in Kane County ran at a rate economists love to see—3.6 percent. Its not too slow. Its not too fast. In addition, it outstripped figures for both Utah and the United States. This moderate rate of growth placed Kane County in

the top third of Utah counties. Moreover, the county appears to be rebounding from its own dip during 1999.

However, not every industry shared in this healthy growth. In fact, mining, construction, and manufacturing all felt job losses related to the national downturn. Even trade lost employment. In fact, only strong expansion in services and government kept employment on the upward track. During 2001, Kane County generated a net increase of about 100 new jobs.

The job losses in the goods-producing industries did take their toll in a slightly higher unemployment rate. However, joblessness remains low and never moved out of the “full-employment” range. In fact, with a jobless rate of only 3.5 percent, Kane County experienced the second lowest unemployment in the state.

Despite and aging population, data from Census 2000 shows that Kane County’s labor force participation increased during the 90s. This change was probably due to a rise in the portion of women who work outside the home. Mothers are certainly working more. More than 60 percent of children under six have both parents in the Kane County labor force.

Wages and Income

As in many nonurban areas, wages in Kane County are relatively low. With an average monthly wage of \$1,643, Kane County in 2001 ranks in the bottom third of Utah’s counties. The county’s average wage measured only 67 percent of the state average. However, over the past decade, Kane County’s average wage has gained substantial ground in comparison to state wages. Just in 2001, wages increased by more than 6 percent—well ahead of inflation.

Manufacturing is the highest-paying industry in the county—not the case in most areas. In fact, transportation/communications/utilities wasn’t far behind in the wage race. But in comparison with statewide industries, government workers’ wages most closely approximate their Utah counterparts. Trade showed the lowest average wage because many trade jobs are part-time and low-pay.

Measures of income (which includes interest income, rental income, business income, government payments such as Social Security and welfare, as well as wages) show an unlikely

picture. Median family income figures rank well below state and national averages. But in terms of per capita personal income, Kane County again ranks fourth in the state—and above the state average. This undoubtedly helped push the share of the population living in poverty to only 8 percent—lower than both state and national averages.

Other indicators

The value of construction permits issued in Kane County during 2001 rose 7 percent. That’s not a whole lot in the erratic world of construction data, but an increase here is always positive. The number of “dwelling units” permitted in the county has remained relatively stable since 1994. However, keep in mind that many of these permits are issued for cabins or buildings used for part-time recreational living. While the value of new home permits rose, nonresidential construction actually declined slightly.

The gross taxable sales figures proved the only real “downer” among Kane County’s 2001 economic indicators. Sales dropped by almost 6 percent—the first drop in almost a decade. A broad-based decline in retail trade sales coupled with declining services sales led to this decrease in sales activity.

The End

While the nation churned in a relatively mild recession, Kane County managed to increase its job base at a moderate rate, to keep its unemployment rate low, and to improve its construction figures. True a few soft spots exist—goods-producing industries have struggled and sales are down. Nevertheless, Kane County has made it through the national downturn with very few problems.